

Inspection of a good school: Whittle Academy

Narberth Way, Coventry, West Midlands CV2 2LH

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 January 2024

Outcome

Whittle Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Michelle Harris. This school is part of Inspire Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lois Whitehouse, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Bermingham. There is also an executive headteacher, Rob Darling, who is responsible for this school and six others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Whittle Academy is an inclusive school with a warm, caring ethos. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are particularly well included in school life. There is a strong sense that everyone will achieve. One parent said, 'Every child is welcome here whatever their needs.' This reflects the views of many parents.

The school sets high expectations. Everyone expects pupils to work hard and behave well. This starts in early years. Here, children learn the school's core values 'care for ourselves, care for others, care for the world'. These values are part of everyday life throughout the school. This culture contributes to pupils' good behaviour. Pupils try their best and take pride in their work. They build their knowledge and skills well as they move through the school and are ready for the next phase in their education.

Pupils enjoy many wider curriculum experiences such as residential trips and local visits. They benefit from external visitors including authors. These activities enhance learning and broaden their horizons. They love participating in events with other schools. Everyone is proud of the Whittle Warblers who recently sang at a national Young Voices event. These activities prepare pupils well to become active and caring citizens.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has created a well-structured curriculum that is broad and ambitious. It focuses on the important knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need. It is designed to

make learning relevant to pupils' lives and the community. This pays off. Pupils love learning and are proud of their school. They learn about local history and the role that Coventry has played nationally. They are especially proud of the Coventry inventor Sir Frank Whittle and his turbojet engine.

Pupils who join the school at different times in the school year are assessed quickly. Teachers prioritise basic skills so that pupils can access the curriculum. As a result, pupils achieve well.

Children get off to a good start in early years. Staff make sure that children share lots of language-rich activities. They get to know stories, songs and rhymes. Many children demonstrate a love of reading. This develops their confidence with language and paves the way for future learning. Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading. Staff have high levels of expertise and confidence in teaching phonics because there is regular training and coaching. Teachers assess pupils and provide extra help to those pupils who are falling behind. However, a small number of these pupils do not practise and apply new sounds frequently enough. This slows the pace at which they become confident, fluent readers.

Improvements made to the wider reading curriculum are paying off. The school has invested in new books to broaden pupils' reading experiences. More pupils are starting to read widely and share favourite books with others. This is strengthening their language comprehension.

Teachers provide skilful care and support for pupils with SEND. Activities are suitably adapted to ensure these pupils learn the same things as their classmates. This helps pupils to achieve well. The enhanced resource provision provides pupils with more complex needs bespoke support from well-trained adults. They are learning the curriculum well at their level.

The mathematics curriculum is delivered through the skilled use of well-chosen resources. The school places a strong focus on securing pupils' confidence and mental fluency. This starts in early years. Children are taught mathematics through practical activities, stories and rhymes. They explore number patterns and use mathematical language confidently to explain their thinking. They achieve well.

The school has ensured that the same level of thought and care has gone into foundation subjects. Pupils recall key aspects of physical geography such as volcanoes and earthquakes. They remember important historical knowledge and events. For example, pupils talk maturely about the causes and consequences of the Versailles Treaty. Pupils develop a good understanding of the world that they live in.

The school tracks pupils' attendance regularly. It provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge for families where poor attendance is an issue. Pupils' attendance is improving.

There is a strong curriculum for personal, social and health education. Pupils speak confidently about different faiths and cultures. They remember what they have learned about important issues such as racism and the dangers of online platforms.

Trust and school leaders and those responsible for governance are ambitious and highly effective in their roles. Staff are positive about the support and consideration that they receive for their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of pupils who have fallen behind in their reading do not have sufficient time to practise the sounds that they have learned. This slows down the rate at which they become fluent and confident readers. The school should ensure that all pupils who fall behind in reading frequently practise new sounds so that they become fluent and confident readers.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2018.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142039
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	10294612
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	253
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Bermingham
CEO of the trust	Lois Whitehouse
Headteacher	Michelle Harris
Website	www.whittleacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Inspire Education Trust.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative provision.
- At the time of this inspection, an interim headteacher had been in post since March 2023. The school runs a before- and after-school club managed by the governing body.
- The school offers enhanced resource provision for a maximum of 10 pupils of mixed primary age. This provision is commissioned by the local authority. Pupils have a range of individual special educational needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with a range of leaders, including senior leaders, the interim and executive headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The inspector met with the chair of the local governing board and one other governor.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at work in pupils' books.
- The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work in other subjects, including geography and art.
- The inspector listened to several pupils read to a familiar adult. She met with groups of pupils to talk about their learning and life in school. She met with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation and plans for improvement. Records of attendance were checked.
- The inspector checked the school's single central record and safeguarding documentation.
- The inspector met with all staff to talk about the curriculum, their workload and the behaviour and personal development of pupils.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at playtime and lunchtime and talked to them about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- The lead inspector reviewed responses to Ofsted Parent View and the pupil and staff surveys. She gathered the views of pupils and staff on site through discussion with these groups.

Inspection team

Marilyn Mottram, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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